



Minnesota State University, Mankato
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State University, Mankato**

Honors Capstone Portfolios

Honors Program

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Mason Vlaanderen Honors Portfolio

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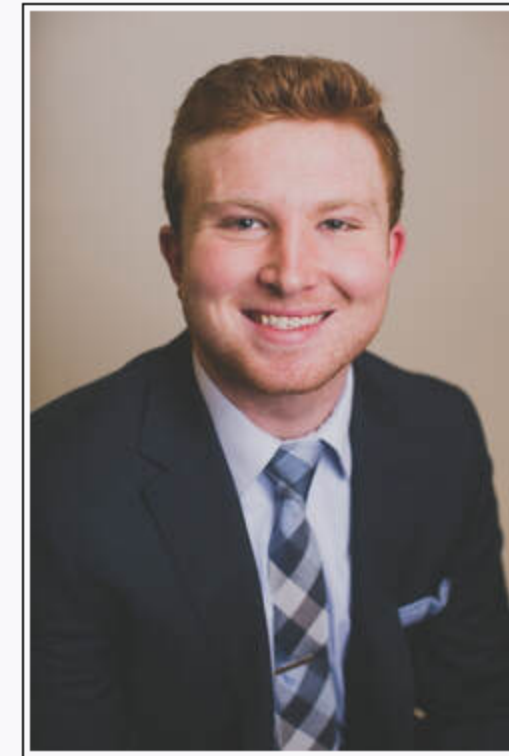
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MASON VLAANDEREN

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Welcome!

My name is Mason Vlaanderen and I am in my senior year at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am majoring in Business Management with minors in Business Administration & Entrepreneurship and Innovation. After completing my undergraduate degree, I plan on obtaining my Masters in Business Administration as well. I am involved on campus by taking part in the Learning Community Program as a member and a leader, conducting research through my courses continuously, and taking advantage of study abroad opportunities to deepen my cultural awareness as I further my education with the honors program.



Personal Mission Statement:

I will further my knowledge in all fields to better myself and those around me in understanding our evolving world to be a productive force for the future.

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." - Benjamin Franklin

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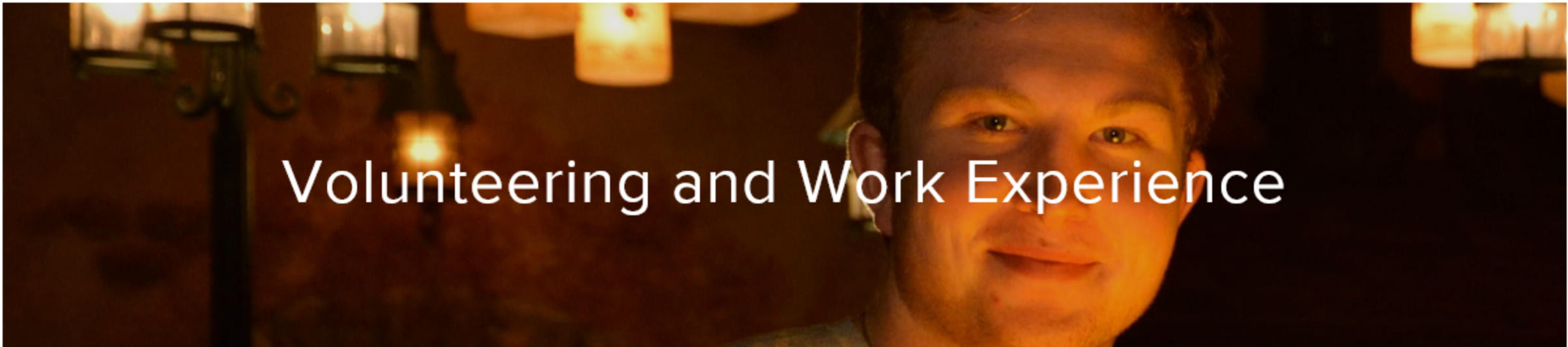
Learn with me!

I am the youngest in my family of four. The only other sibling I have is my older sister, Shelby. At home, I take on the role of the handyman. This simply means that i'm the guy my parents ask to move heavy items and fix complex things. I don't mind the work because I will always have something to do. I love being the youngest because I have numerous mentors to teach me how to be the best version of myself.

My hobbies include biking, watching movies, hanging out with friends, rock climbing, and weightlifting. I have a strong passion for hobbies that involve physical activity that I attribute in part to my extroverted nature. Most people find loving such exhausting tasks like weightlifting and rock climbing weird but I see these activities as ways I can challenge myself. Anything I can do to better myself is worth my time and always will be.

I also like to better the lives of others by giving back whenever I can. I have been blessed to have a great upbringing and comfortable childhood and I want to do my part in helping others feel those same comforts I had growing up. Whether the task involves a lot my time or simply my strength, I love the smile on the faces of the people I help. It's pure happiness and that's what I believe makes the world go round.

MASON VLAANDEREN



Volunteering and Work Experience

Volunteering

Fire and Ice Ball

Date: December 2019

Town: Mankato, MN

I coordinated an event with my learning community to volunteer with United Way Mankato to set up the Fire and Ice Ball. The Fire and Ice Ball was located at Snell MotorSports and would help the non-profit receive funds from generous benefactors in the community. My learning community had a lot of fun and bonded with each other as we worked.



My students and I at the event

ECHO Food Shelf

Date: January - April 2019

Town: Mankato, MN

I participated in a Community Engagement Project where another honors student and I volunteered biweekly at ECHO. I worked with the manager and talked about possible problems that ECHO faces with the community. I found this project to push me outside my comfort zone and offered me a great learning opportunity. This experience opened new connections with other volunteers and gave me satisfaction in my work. I'm always happy to invest my time to an important aspect of many individuals lives.



The logo for ECHO Food Shelf!

Minnesota Valley Action Council

Date: January - March 2019

Town: Mankato, MN

Through one of my management classes, I was lucky to partner with Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC). I participated in a project with a group of classmates to create a basket for an auction that MVAC was conducting. This auction would act as a fundraiser to raise funds for the non-profit. My group and I asked for donations around town and were able to create a caffeine basket that included different types of coffees, mugs, and garnish that caffeine lovers would adore. Our basket was valued around \$50 and offered a great experience for me to get involved with the community.



Work Experience

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Date: August 2019 - December 2020

Town: Mankato, MN

Job Title: Learning Community Coordinator

I was offered the opportunity to work for the Learning Community Program of which I had been a member of since 2017. In this role, I was responsible for coordinating events and activities that bolstered my students in their college and professional career.



My students studying together during a study zone!

Donaldson Company

Date: June 2020 - August 2020

Town: Bloomington, MN

Job Title: Product Management/Outbound Sales Intern

The Covid-19 Pandemic has taken many jobs away from citizens around the world as lockdowns are in place to protect the people. I was fortunate enough to still continue in my future role as an intern even as many other organizations have shut down their internship programs. I worked remotely through a virtual desktop system where I conducted market research, competitive analysis, product literature, and outbound sales for 10 weeks. I learned a large amount of information through my time with Donaldson and gained a better understanding of what my future career looks like.



Menards

Date: June 2019 - August 2019

Town: Baxter, MN

Job Title: Management Intern

I was searching for an internship to help me develop my leadership skills and coordination efficiency near my hometown and Menards was a shining light in the dark and long search. Menards offers a Management Internship Program that allows for students like myself to come into a store location and work closely with the store manager. The store manager is the "boss" and I was able to learn a lot from him. I was able to learn a lot from him and the store manager. I was able to learn a lot from him and the store manager. I was able to learn a lot from him and the store manager.

the manager team to run the store. I learned how to sell products, meet deadlines, coordinate team members to complete tasks, and work with customers to foster positivity with their experience.



Rasinski Construction

Date: May 2018 - August 2018

Town: Nisswa, MN

Job Title: Carpenter

I was graciously offered a job by the contractor of my house in Nisswa, MN for the summer between my freshman and sophomore year at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I worked on construction sites, learned how to build houses, and completed various other tasks that I will carry with my for my future work endeavors. I started work at 6:30 am every morning to help construct dream houses and do interior designs for those in my local community. A typical workday involves about eight hours of work and I loved every second of it!

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Education

Minnesota State University, Mankato

August 2017 - Present

I am currently attending Minnesota State University, Mankato striving for a major in Business Management and minors in Business Administration & Entrepreneurship and Innovation. I was a member of the First Year Honors Learning Community and the Emerging Leaders Learning Community. I am now a Learning Community Coordinator for the Sophomore Business Learning Community and will be returning to the job for my senior year.

Tarrant County Community College

August 2016 - May 2017

I was given the opportunity to take college courses from a local Community College at my high school. I attended 4 seperate english literature classes held by 4 different professors. I was briefly introduced to the workload of a college student and completed all four courses with a 4.0 GPA. I am very proud of my work and enjoyed making numerous friends while reading important literature.

Southlake Carroll High School/ Senior High School

August 2013 - June 2017

Before high school, I moved around states and schools giving me numerous opportunities and many lasting friendships. I was however lucky and thankful to have attended the same high school for four years. Well... kindof. The approach my school district took was less than extraordinary. I attended 9th and 10th grade at Carroll High School and my 11th and 12th grade classes at the Senior High School. Overall, I had a great experience joining numerous clubs and honor societies with my friends.

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"The mission of the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato is to create future leaders, researchers and global citizens by providing high ability and motivated students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a community of scholars that foster their development as future leaders in a global society."

For further information on the Honors Program please visit: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsngoals>

Freshman Year Learning Plan

Date: August 2017 - May 2018

This is my learning plan for my freshman year at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I will be producing a new learning plan each year to keep myself from being complacent and I will continue improving on my competencies.



learning_plan.docx
Download File

Sophomore Year Learning Plan

Date: August 2018 - May 2019

My learning plan for my sophomore year is attached below. I plan on achieving the majority of my leadership and research competencies this year.



learning_plan_sophomore.docx
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Junior Year Learning Plan

Date: August 2019 - May 2020

My learning plan for my junior year is attached below. I plan on achieving all of my leadership competency this year while vastly improving my cultural and research competency.



learning_plan_junior.docx
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MASON VLAANDEREN

HOME ABOUT ME HONORS PROGRAM



"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal." (20, Student Handbook)

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Leadership is a trait that brings people together to achieve a common goal. It's a value I find very important and useful in my desired field of study. I want to be able to bring people together and complete tasks efficiently while promoting efficiency and happiness. The competency for leadership requires one to show their experiences leading teams and developing values that promote leadership. I have had the best time exploring my own leadership style and seeing it evolve over time.

My Experiences

LEARNING COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

EXPLORING PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIP WITH MENARDS

MENTORSHIP PHILOSOPHY PAPER

INTEGRATED BUSINESS EXPERIENCE (IBE)

LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENT

Leadership Synthesis

The process of developing my leadership competency has been dynamic in the aspects it encompasses. Across coursework, I have been able to learn theories of leadership while putting my own previous knowledge to the test. Through this process, I have unearthed different leadership styles and embodied those that are consistent with my core values. With these experiences, I have identified 3 stages in developing my leadership competency: opportunity, enlightenment, application. This timeline has allowed me to grow continuously within the competency.

Initially, for the opportunity stage of my personal leadership development, I joined the [Honors Learning Community](#). Within in this group, we identified our personal values and used those to pinpoint our roles within the group. I discovered I valued accountability, success, and respect in leaders. In addition, this group helped me recognize and acknowledge my extroversion and competitiveness as positive traits that can be utilized into my leadership style.

Following the opportunity stage, I quickly transitioned into my enlightenment stage where I dove into leadership philosophy and the meaning behind my own ideals and values. I started my journey by partaking in a [Mentorship Philosophy Course](#) where the class would explore the various philosophies behind leadership and its evolution throughout time. I then completed a course where we [Explored Our Personal Leadership](#). I was able to critique real-world leadership philosophies and group dynamics in an effort to better understand effective styles of leadership. This experience allowed me to ground myself to the situational style of leadership, where leaders adapt to the people they lead and the situation at hand. Both of these courses helped my reflect upon my personal values and prepared me to apply my findings to my life.

Finally, it was time for me to apply my knowledge into real leadership roles. As the Sales Director for my [Integrated Business Experience \(IBE\)](#), I learned that the situational style of leadership is one to be further pursued due to its universal relevance and ability to adapt with different teams. Furthermore, with my acceptance of a [Management Internship with Menards](#), I developed my situational style of leadership and focused on some constants that have maintained significance in my personal leadership philosophy. Some of those constants successful leaders maintain include empathy, trust, and deep connections with their team no matter the situation. Finally, my involvement as a [Learning Community Coordinator](#) allowed me to not only see my strengths but also my weaknesses', specifically in time management and coordination. I was forced to grow in these areas and became a better leader from it.

When asked what my philosophy on leadership is, I tell people that a great leader is one who understands their situation, the people they lead, and their strengths. Each decision you make must be taken with the mindset that you want to enhance all of these facets. When you do this, people will place you among the great leaders in this world.

MASON VLAANDEREN

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"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to knowledge." (21, Student handbook)

For further information on the Honors Program please visit: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsngoals>

Research is one thing that has advanced the human race into a more civilized stage of our evolution. The research competency is one that at first glance shook my confidence because I was not sure I wanted to dress in a lab coat and experiment with test tubes. I was relieved when I learned that research can be completed in many other ways that can be productive to myself and my interests. I now know that any statistical findings and observations I conduct and put into my own thoughts can be beneficial to my progression in the competency.

My Experiences

- COUNTRY REPORT: BELIZE
- PHILOSOPHY RESEARCH PAPER
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT
- RESEARCH ESSAY FOR HONORS
- IBE MARKET RESEARCH
- BIOLOGY LAB REPORTS

Research Synthesis

When I entered college with the intent to graduate as a business professional, I did not expect to complete any relevant research to my major and field of study. However, as time progressed, I quickly realized that research is conducted in many roles within business. Throughout my time here at MSU, I have learned that the purpose of research is to advance knowledge in any given field by combining existing knowledge with original, newly found information backed by trusted processes. My insight and development have grown tremendously in this competency while maintaining focus on my future in the field of business. To embark upon my research journey at college, I completed research coursework in my [Honors FYEX class](#). We looked into where to find credible sources and why ethical sourcing and written material is crucial to progressive research. I then incorporated my thoughts in research reports I completed in my [Biology Course](#). I conducted research on my sources to make sure they were credible and reliable, then used those sources to develop my own ideas. It was important to me that I came across as a credible author, so I chose sources that were appropriate to my thesis. This fundamental aspect of ethical work has become a commonality to all the research I will conduct in the future.

In my next encounter with research, I participated in a [Community Engagement Project](#) where our mission was to promote social change within the local Mankato area. We worked with a local food bank, ECHO, and concluded that use of performance reports on mandatory volunteers can quell some negative feedback associated with required volunteering, such as disengaged workers and poor customer experiences. In our research process, we incorporated our observations with credible backing to promote real change in our community. I then built upon this experience when I completed a [Philosophy Research Paper](#) where I compare and contrast Utilitarianism vs. Relativism. I explored numerous philosophers' viewpoints and incorporated their thoughts into my own thesis and paper. I then made the connection that organization is key to the research process. Seeing the organization of the philosopher's original work helped me understand how they conveyed their intelligence to others and thus I used a similar framework to convey my thoughts. Parallel to this project, I conducted research on the country of Belize. I utilized numerous sources that allowed me to create a credible and up-to-date [Country Report](#) that future students could utilize. This would not be possible without ethical research practices and cohesive synthesis of sources for thesis development.

As my skills developed over time, I decided to take part in original research that relates to my field in the [Integrated Business Experience \(IBE\)](#) program. I joined the marketing team and completed original market research where we identified what product we wanted to sell. We then comprised a survey asking questions that would narrow down our target market. As a team, we struggled to come up with adequate questions to decipher our target market. However, with some help from our professors, we were able to make a concise and positive survey that would supply us with sufficient information. After spreading our survey around, we concluded our research and devised charts and graphs to easily disseminate our results. We then presented our findings to investment bankers who held vast knowledge in the field. We received positive feedback but also our fair share of constructive criticism. After some long nights and exhaustive additional research and learning from our mistakes, we were able to receive our loan from the investment bankers. This application of original business-related research was incredibly beneficial to my knowledge in the research process.

To say personal growth has happened throughout my college career is an understatement. With the experiences I have encountered, my confidence in conducting research has grown exponentially and I do not plan to stop after I receive my degree. My skills in this area translate to a wide variety of teams across the business spectrum. When learning can translate to application, amazing work can be done. I am excited to continue and grow as my professional career take off!

MASON VLAANDEREN

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"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit second language and communication competencies and exhibit cultural competency and awareness." (22, Student Handbook)

For further information on the Honors Program please visit: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsngoals>

Global Citizenship is a competency that requires the individual to diversify their knowledge of others and how different cultures live and interact with each other. Being someone who can understand and be non-discriminatory based on culture or race is important in the modern and future society.

My Experiences

[STUDY ABROAD TO BELIZE/MAYA BAGS PROJECT](#)[GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP ESSAY FOR HONORS](#)[SPANISH 201](#)[IMMIGRANT STORY VIDEOS](#)[MULTICULTURAL FASHION SHOW](#)

Global Citizenship Synthesis

An individual that embodies the concept of Global Citizenship is one who is aware of their own culture, knows and understands different cultural perspectives, and actively tries to communicate with others. Before joining the Honors Program, this concept was not present in my life. However, the past 3 and a half years have prompted me to grow through different experiences within this competency.

To become a Global Citizen, one must be aware of their own culture to obtain the ability to decipher others. Within my [Honors First Year Seminar course \(FYEX\)](#), my classmates and I reflected upon our own culture and how that looks different for each of us. Furthermore, I participated in viewing [Immigrant Stories](#) and how their cultures morphed with their new communities. We explored how they had to sacrifice different aspects of their old culture and adapt characteristics of the new culture that surrounds them. Nevertheless, the culture they brought also changed the people they met and helped spread ideas. Seeing these different perspectives allowed me to reflect upon my own culture and the boundaries it sets for me.

When it comes to my understanding of other cultures and how they view the world, it's fair to say I lacked in that department before attending university. To change my situation, I decided to take a [Study Abroad class on Fair Trade in Belize](#). I compounded added to my previous knowledge by asking questions that sought more in-depth reasoning behind their way of life. After doing so, my class partnered with a local Belizean company called MayaBags to bolster their business in America. Throughout this experience, I learned the importance of having to change and adapt to unfamiliar situations. Trying to bridge cultural items to an American market is no easy endeavor, but worth the time and effort.

To fully become a Global Citizen is to embrace language and the connection it can provide between cultures. When I first came to Mankato, I visited a [Multicultural Fashion Show](#) that showcased different cultural garbs from around the world. I learned how the differences in language and culture intertwine by talking with students from different regions. The slight differences in cultural significance of objects but similarity in translation is monumental in offering an easy bridge between the two cultures.

Furthermore, I grew up in Texas and Spanish was often spoken in my area. I engaged here and there but wanted to take the next step. I did this by partaking in [Spanish 201](#) here at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This opportunity forced me out of my comfort zone by talking with people outside of class in Spanish. I also learned more about the differences between my first language and Spanish and how to utilize the differences in unfamiliar situations. After this class and all of the different engagement I had with people, I was able to understand the complexity of relationships between people from different cultures.

All of these experiences have impacted me tremendously in my pursuit of being a global citizen by allowing me to see different perspectives. I will be using these experiences to further learn and bolster my understanding of different cultures around the world. Altogether, these experiences have been some of the most valuable changes to my outlook on life and I will forever carry them with me.